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ENG 3892-099: Shakespeare

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Eng 3892: "Shakespeare"

spring 2012 / Section 001

Dr. Chris Wixson

syllabus

"Every age creates its own Shakespeare."

-Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*

course philosophy

Ben Jonson's epitaph, memorializing Shakespeare as "not of an age but for all time" has proven prophetic. In April 2010, the Royal Shakespeare Company premiered *Such Tweet Sorrow*, an experimental five-week production of *Romeo and Juliet* performed via Twitter. A month before, the venerable Arden Shakespeare series officially welcomed an addition to the Bard's canon entitled *Double Falsehood*. The last year has produced two major cinematic adaptations (*The Tempest* and *Coriolanus*) along with the sudsy *Anonymous* which explored the authorship controversy. In short, with a "brand new" play and two films out and a central role in the vanguard of alternative media performance, Shakespeare is alive and well in the 21st century. Centering our inquiry around issues of desire and power, this course will read very closely five of Shakespeare's plays that span his entire career, and their complexities of language demand rigor in reading, writing, and thinking. Our course will also include regular excursions into theatrical practice. We will be approaching these plays as both literary *and* theatrical texts, discussing not only their political and historical thematic implications but also their potential for acting, directorial, and technical choices. The course has a demanding assignment schedule that necessitates time and planning, and all assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Since English 3802 involves a fair amount of writing, we will spend time in class talking about the organization and construction of strong interpretive arguments. The format of each class will be relatively fluid, changing with regard to the material, my ideas, and your interests. There will be some discussion as well as the occasional informal lecture. However, this course should focus primarily on you, your questions, and opinions. Remember this is not MY class but ours.

Learning Outcomes

1. To provide strategies for reading and appreciating the works of William Shakespeare for the insight they provide about Early Modern England and our own time.
2. To allow each member of the class to engage the significant issues and questions raised by the plays through writing, performance, and class discussion.
3. To assist in the development of skills of critical thinking and argumentative writing.

course texts

The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. David Bevington (as well as individual editions)

The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, Russ McDonald

contact information

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assignments

* Short pieces of writing (2-3 pages) called "seed papers" in which you pose a productive question which relates to the inquiry issues of the course about the text and then attempt to answer it. You may be asked to present and conduct class discussion with your question once during the semester. However, you will be required to write three total, that deal specifically with the language of part of the reading due for that day. Because these papers are primarily for discussion, no late seed papers will be accepted.

**The first (due 1/12) must analyze the relationship between the two characters based on the language Shakespeare chooses in the opening lines of *Midsummer*

* Two critical papers that are engaged, engaging, and articulate. The first will be a *Notes and Queries*-style assignment (to be delivered at the English Studies conference on Saturday, March 31st) while the second will involve theatre history. Writing and topic guidelines will be handed out in advance.

*Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion — defined as TALKING productively.

*A Midterm and a Final Exam

*Active, Engaged participation in Performance activities, including the Sonnet Project

final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Three Seed Papers	15%
Two Critical Papers	35%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	20%
In-class Writings/ Sonnet Project / Active Participation/ Performance	30%

**You must complete all written assignments and exams to complete the course. Failure to complete any one of the components represents incomplete work for the semester and anyone with incomplete work will not receive a passing grade for the course.

attendance

Mandatory.

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. Because so much in this course relies upon in-class work, absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are

allowed **three** unexcused absences before your grade is negatively affected. After two, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by half a letter. **More than six unexcused absences will result in a "0" for participation. More than nine unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course.** Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful. Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do not get in touch asking "for the assignment" or a "rundown of what you missed." My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course.

class participation

Mandatory.

Think of our meetings as potluck conversations and activities; You should come to class *prepared to talk* about the reading for that day. Participation in a college-level course means careful, full preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, risk-taking in writing and thinking. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials. Class participation means that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually AND that you work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and success. (This might mean, for example, moving from merely your position during class discussion to striving to promote dialogue between yourself and other students). In addition to your required short papers, what else you bring to share need not be written out but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic or questions. Reading quizzes may happen relatively frequently to ensure the quality of our discussions.

Coming to class and saying you are "frustrated" with the reading and thus have nothing to contribute is intellectually lazy and irresponsible. Shakespeare's language is demanding but rewarding; while there will be frustration with its complexity at times, this course understands the complexity as part of the challenge to which we aspire to rise during the semester.

We will meet on February 13th and 15th by the racquetball courts at the SRC. On the Shakespearean stage, the presence of the actor was known as "the ability of the body." Our explorations of the language this term will include acts of interpretation *performed*. You will not be judged on acting ability; this side of the course is an opportunity to approach the act of interpretation in a different way than we do as scholars. There will be a (hopefully only initial) trepidation with and uncertainty surrounding this approach, and going outside of the traditional English "comfort zone" will yield insightful results on their own but also in tandem with classroom discussion. There will be badminton.

class preparation

In addition to your written assignments, what else you bring to share need not be written out (although you may be asked to do so) but should refer to **specific passages** in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic. Come to class with an agenda. That means coming with lucrative questions that you think the **texts** are asking with their form and content, not simply questions you have *about* the texts. In addition, you may also wish to read the introductions to our plays, although I would advise doing so **AFTER** you have read each play; consider this sentence a formal spoiler alert. Besides preparation, class participation also means responding constructively, respectfully, and energetically to what other seminarians share, that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. In

short, you are expected to work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and to strive to promote dialogue between yourself and other seminarians. **I TAKE THIS GRADE VERY SERIOUSLY.**

late papers

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a "0."** Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check** email, news, or box scores, surf the web, use chat applications, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer.

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed** to text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

academic integrity

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

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course calendar

Dr. Chris Wixson

** Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you bring it to each class meeting so as to make the appropriate revisions.

** When there is reading due in the *Bedford*, please bring it to class with you.

January	9	Course Introduction / What is "Shakespeare"?
	11	First 20 lines of <i>Dream</i> / Seed Paper #1 Due (Everyone)
	13	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> I
	16	NO CLASS — MLK'S BIRTHDAY
	18	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> II Read Bedford: pp. 1-3; 109-14; 123-7; 134-7; 194-7; 221-4
	20	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> III Bedford: pp. 145-7, 160-2 (Ovidian influences)
	23	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> IV
	25	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> V
	27	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	30	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i> Bedford: pp. 81-5; 253-53; 265-8 (Marriage, Gender, and Economics)
February	1	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i> Seed #2 due
	3	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>
	6	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>
	8	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i> Seed #3 due

10 *Taming of the Shrew*
Bedford: pp. 285-90 ("Homily of the State of Matrimony")

13 Performing Shakespeare
Orchestration: *Henry VI Part Three*

15 Performing Shakespeare
Orchestration: *Winter's Tale*
Critical Paper #1 Due

17 NO CLASS – LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

20 The Sonnet Project

22 The Sonnet Project

24 *Measure for Measure*

27 *Measure for Measure*

29 *Measure for Measure*

March 2 *Measure for Measure* / Seed #5 due

5 *Measure for Measure*

7 *Measure for Measure*

9 MIDTERM EXAM

HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!

19 *Hamlet*
Bedford: pp. 85-90 (Tragedy)

21 *Hamlet* / Seed #6 due

23 *Hamlet*

26 *Hamlet*

28 *Hamlet* / Seed #7 due

30 *Hamlet*

**Saturday, March 31st – English Studies Conference 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

April	2	<i>Hamlet</i>
	4	<i>Hamlet</i>
	6	<i>Hamlet</i>
	9	Performing Shakespeare
	11	Performing Shakespeare
	13	Performing Shakespeare / Critical Paper #2 Due
	16	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
	18	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> / Seed #8 due
	20	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
	23	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
	25	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
	27	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
		Conclusion / Evaluation / Exam Review

**Final exam date: Tuesday, May 1st 10:15 AM -12:15 PM